

Taymiyyan Influences in an Ottoman-anafī Milieu: The Case of Amad al-Rūmī al-Āqiārī

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Taymiyyan Influences in an Ottoman-Ḥanafī Milieu: The Case of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī

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Abstract

Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī (d. 1041/1632) is one of the most intriguing religious personalities of seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkey: although progress towards disclosing key aspects of his thought has been made recently – such as the association of al-Āqḥiṣārī with the Ottoman puritanical movement, the Qāḍīzādelis – the intellectual world-view of al-Āqḥiṣārī and, in particular, intellectual influences on his thought, are still hazy. This paper aims to make progress in this regard by studying the intellectual spring from which al-Āqḥiṣārī takes his conceptualisation of the religio-legal term bidʿa*, the central theme of his seminal work, the* Majālis al-abrār. *In doing so, the paper finally puts to rest the vexed question over whether Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya's writings had any influence in Ottoman Turkey prior to the advent of the 19th century reformist movements.*

Introduction

Until recently, the Ottoman jurist, theologian, mystic and pietist Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī (d. 1040/1631) was virtually unknown to the academic community. He was first introduced by Y. Michot, whose critical edition and translation of the *Risāleh-i dukhāniyyeh* (*Epistle on Tobacco*)[1] brought to light al-Āqhiṣārī's rigorist, pietistic approach to religion and his expertise in jurisprudence. Why a scholar of such standing has been ignored in Ottoman studies is intriguing. In al-Āqḥiṣārī's case, what probably decided his fate was the association of his ideas with the Qāḍīzādelis, a group of scholars and activists who, by the 17th century, had gained notoriety in Ottoman Turkey for their ultra-conservative approach to Islam. They enjoyed significant influence in the first half of the 17th century in the imperial capital, Istanbul, and through their royal patrons they were able to impose on Ottoman society their programme of religious reform.

The Qāḍīzādelis remain an understudied phenomenon in Ottoman history. Other than Madeline Zilfi's published volume, and three unpublished doctoral theses, there are to date few detailed studies available on the movement.[2] Most surveys tend to repeat

[1] Y. Michot, *Against Smoking: An Ottoman Manifesto*. An introduction, edition and translation of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's *al-Risāla al-dukhāniyya* (Leicester, 2010).

[2] M. Zilfi, *Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis, 1988); Zilfi, 'The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in 17th Century Istanbul,' *Journal of Near-Eastern Studies*, 45 (1986), pp. 251–269; N. Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy among the Ottomans in the Seventeenth Century with Special Reference

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views on the Qāḍīzādelis found in Ottoman accounts written by bourgeois eye-witnesses. Contemporaneous accounts largely held the group to be an unsophisticated mob of pietists who were arrogant and power hungry. This same trope is found in modern studies with little modification. In the main, Qāḍīzādeli doctrines continue to be presented as obscurantist and the movement is seen as either proto-fundamentalist or proto-Wahhābī.[3] I have challenged such representations of the Qāḍīzādelis elsewhere, primarily by a close reading of texts associated with the movement.[4] The present paper focuses on another concern, namely the intellectual origins of the Qāḍīzādeli position on innovation (*bidʿa*).

Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār wa masālik al-akhyār wa maḥāyiq al-bidaʿ wa maqāmiʿ al-ashrār* (*The Assemblies of the Pious and the Paths of the Excellent, The Obliteration of Innovations and the Curbing of the Wicked*), a commentary on one hundred *ḥadīth*s collected in *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna* (*The Lamps of the Tradition*) of Abū Muḥammad Ḥuṣayn b. Masʿūd al-Baghawī (d. 515/1122)[5], is an ideal point of departure for such an inquiry. A veritable manifesto for religious reform, the author aimed to bring the religious doctrines and ritual practices of his fellow Ottomans into line with a specific understanding of orthodoxy shared by him and his Qāḍīzādeli comrades. The text sheds light on why the reformers were so zealous in their opposition to innovation. Perhaps more interestingly, the text also betrays the historical influences upon its author, notably that of Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), a link which has been ardently disavowed by some in Ibn Taymiyya studies.[6]

The Man and the Text

Despite the large number of works which al-Āqḥiṣārī authored, the impressive number of copies of these still extant in manuscript form and the high regard with which the *Majālis*

to the Qādī-zāde Movement', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981; Ş. Çavuşoğlu, 'The Kadizadeli Movement: An Attempt of Şeri'at-Minded Reform in the Ottoman Empire', unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 1990. See also also Joseph Von Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (Vienna: C.A. Hartleben's Verlage, 1829–1830; reprint, Granz: Akademischen Druck, 1963), 5: pp. 163–164, 528–531; 6: 5–8, 182–185 (page references are to reprint edition); F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (New York, 1973), 2: pp. 420–423; A. Galanté, *Histoire des Juifs d'Anatolie*, vol. I, *Les Juifs d'Izmir* (Istanbul, 1937), pp. 250–252; Abdülbaki Gölpinarli, *Mevlānā'dan Sonra Mevlevīlik*, 2nd edition (Istanbul, 1983), pp. 158–168; Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1, *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280–1808* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 206–207; A.Y. Ocak, 'XVII. Yüzyilda Osmanli Imparatorlugun'da Dinde Tasfiye (Püritanizm) Teşebbüşlerine Bir Bakiş: "Kadizādeliler Hareketi",' *Türk Kültürü Araştirmalari*, 1–2 (1983): pp. 208–226; H. Inalçik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, translated by N. Itzkowitz and C. Imber (New York, 1973).

[3] See especially Çavuşoğlu's 'The Kadizadeli Movement' and C. Kafadar, 'The Myth of the Golden Age: Ottoman Historical Consciousness in the Post-Süleymanic Era,' in *Süleyman the Second and His Times*, edited by H. Inalçik and C. Kafadar (Istanbul, 1993).

[4] For a detailed study on this, see M. Sheikh, "Qāḍīzādeli Revivalism Reconsidered in Light of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār*", unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2012.

[5] Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn b. Masʿūd b. Muḥammad al-Baghawī, Shāfiʿī jurist and prolific author in *ḥadīth*. He is most famous for his *Sharḥ al-Sunna* and *Maṣābīḥ al-Sunna*. See E. Dickinson, 'Baghawī', *EI*2.

[6] According to K. El-Rouayheb, the influence of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Ḥanbalī Sunni scholars in the centuries subsequent to his death and up until the 19th century has been exaggerated. Regarding Taymiyyan influence in Ottoman Turkey, he says,'The views of Birgiwī and his Kadizadeli followers may have been rooted, not in the thought of Ibn Taymiyya, but in an intolerant current within the Ḥanafi-Maturidi school'. See his chapter, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing views of Ibn Taymiyya among non-Ḥanbalī Sunni scholars" in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, (ed.) Y. Rapoport and S. Ahmed (Karachi, 2011), p. 304.

al-abrār was held by 19th century Indian revivalists of Deoband such as Muftī Kifāyatullāh Dehlawī (d. 1371/1952),[7] we know surprisingly little about his life. Al-Āqḥiṣārī was born in Cyprus to a Christian family before being taken away as a child after the Ottoman conquest of the island between 977/1570–981/1573 and converted to Islam.[8] Initially sent to join the Devşirme for a religious education, al-Āqḥiṣārī went on to become a Ḥanafī scholar, gaining fluency in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Al-Āqḥiṣārī spent most of his life, once having arrived on mainland Turkey, in Āqḥiṣār, Western Anatolia. Unfortunately, apart from these meagre details, we know little else about this Ottoman scholar; it is for good reason, therefore, that he has been described as "the forgotten puritan of Ottoman Islam".[9]

Y. Michot has urged that al-Āqḥiṣārī be read in the context of the reformist milieu of his time. This is since al-Aqḥiṣārī's *oeuvre*, particularly his writings on Sufism, clearly bears the mark of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) and, to a lesser extent, though no less significantly, Aḥmad b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Al-Āqḥiṣārī can be located therefore in the company of other Ottoman revivalists such as Birgivī and Qāḍīzāḍe whose works also bear the same mark. Furthermore, as Michot has shown, there is a strikingly large collection of manuscripts in which the texts of Birgivī's *Vasiyyet-Nāmeh*, the *Epistle - Risāleh* of Qāḍīzāde Meḥmed (d. 1145/1635) and al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Creed - Risāleh fī l-ʿaqā'id* (or *Risāleh*, or *Vasiyyet-Nāmeh*) are bound together, as a sacred trilogy. This suggests that in the minds of some, the religious *weltanschauungen* of these three scholars were both convergent and of equal import.[10] Michot is of the view – one supported by this author – that if introduced to the academic community, al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* and other works could reveal much about puritanical reform in the Ottoman 17th century and shed light on the dynamics of Muslim revivalism in other parts of the Islamic world.[11]

Majālis al-abrār is al-Āqḥiṣārī's magnum opus and subsumes many of the questions and interests which he treats in shorter epistles. The text was probably composed during the years immediately preceding, or corresponding to, the Ottoman imperial ban on tobacco, proclaimed by Murād IV after the great fire of Istanbul in 1043/1633 and certainly no earlier than 1025/1616. This conclusion is based on the fact that the *Majālis* draws heavily from *Kitāb naṣīḥat al-ikhwān bi-ijtināb al-dukhān – The Book Recommending to the Brothers to Keep Away from Tobacco*, a treatise authored by the Mālikī shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Laqānī (d. 1041/1631) in 1025/1616.[12]

[7]For this, see the introduction to the Urdu translation of the *Majālis al-abrār* by Kifāyatullāh al-Dehlawī (Karachi), p. 36.

[8]Y. Michot, *L'opium et le cafe*, p. 54; M. Ṭāhir Bursalı, *Osmanlı müellifleri*, (ed.) A.F. Yavuz and İ. Özen, 3 vols. (Istanbul: Meral Yayınevi, 1975), Vol. 1, p. 33. On conversions to Islam in the Ottoman Empire, see M. Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, 2011); Marc Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (Oxford, 2008).

[9]Michot, *Against Smoking*, pp. 1–2.

[10]Michot, *Against Smoking*, pp. 1–2. In MS. *Michot 0802*, al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Risaleh* is bound between those of Birgivī and Qāḍīzāde. Michot provides details of other manuscripts in which the three can be found bound together: Istanbul, *Yazma Bağişlar 6494*; *Laleli 2461, 2463, 2468, 2470, 2473, 2474, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2481, 2482*. (*Against Smoking*, p. 2).

[11]Michot, 'Kātib Çelebi's time: some views on the Ottoman society in the *Majālis al-abrār* of Aḥmad al-Rūmī al-Āqḥiṣārī,' (unpublished paper delivered at ISAM, Istanbul, 2008).

[12] Michot, *Against Smoking*, pp. 34–35.

A Scholastic in the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī Tradition

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's fundamental doctrinal outlook, in keeping with most members of the Ottoman learned establishment, was consistent with the Māturīdī school.[13] In the first three chapters of the *Majālis*, he states the importance of correct doctrine as a precursor to embarking upon the spiritual path. It is in these chapters that he cites several classical *kalām*-theological arguments to prove central Islamic dogmata. His *Risāleh*, which is primarily concerned with doctrinal questions, also betrays a fundamentally Māturīdī theological framework.[14]

In the second session of the *Majālis*, al-Āqḥiṣārī is forthright about his view on the place of *kalām* within Islamic epistemology as well as its utility for travellers on the spiritual path:

> The path to knowing God, the Exalted, is reached via two routes: the first is the route of the People of Reason and Argumentation (*Ahl al-naẓar wa l-istidlāl*) and the second is the route of the People of Spiritual Exercise and Exertion (*Ahl al-riyāḍa wa l-mujāhada*). As for those travelling on the route of the People of Reason and Argumentation, when they hold to a religion (*milla*) from the religions of the Prophets then they are [to be considered] dialecticians (*mutakallimūn*). If not, then they are [to be considered] peripatetic philosophers (*ḥukamāʾ mashshā'ūn). [The latter group] are not [considered to be] from the people of religion. As for those travelling on the path of *riyāḍa* and *mujāhada*, if their spiritual exertion is in agreement with the Sharīʿa, then they are the [to be considered] law-abiding Sufis (*al-Ṣufiyyat al-mutasharriʿūn*); if not, then they are [to be considered] Illuminationist Philosophers (*Ḥukamā' Ishtirāqiyyūn*), who are a group from among the Philosophers who have chosen the method of Plato vis-a-vis intuition (*kashf*) and contemplation (*ʿiyān*). They are also not from the people of religion.
>
> This said, each path is made up of two groups. Those believers (*al-muʾmin*) who know God (*al-ʿārif bi-llāh*), are only two from these groups: the first are People of Reason and Argumentation and the second are the People of Witness and Contemplation (*Ahl al-Mushāhada wa l-ʿiyān*). This is since if their knowledge of Him, the Exalted, is obviated by way of rational proofs (*dalīl ʿaqlī*) and revealed proofs (*dalīl naqlī*), then they are from the people of external knowledge and demonstration (*ahl al-ʿilm al-ẓāhir wa l-burhān*); if their knowledge of Him, the Exalted, is by way of witnessing with inner-sight (*ʿayn al-baṣīra*), then they are from the people of internal knowledge and contemplation. The attainment (*ḥāṣil*) of the first path is the perfection of speculative power (*quwwa naẓariyya*) and ascension through its stations; the attainment of the second path is the perfection of practical power (*quwwa ʿamaliyya*) and ascension through its levels. This is the real miracle (*karāma ḥaqīqiyya*) which manifests at the hands of the Friends of God (*walī Allāh*).[15]

Kalām is therefore considered by al-Āqḥiṣārī one of only two authentic and acceptable paths to gnosis. Elsewhere in the *Majālis*, he speaks about the need for the science of

[13]On Māturīdī doctrine, see M. Çeric, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi* (Kuala Lumpur, 1995).

[14]The theological texts taught on the Ottoman madrasa curriculum were Ashʿarī, despite the Ottomans being generally of the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī school. The primary books taught in *kalām* were the *Sharḥ al-ʿaqāʾid* of al-Taftazānī (d. 793/1390) and *Sharḥ al-maqāṣid* and *Sharḥ al-mawāqif* of Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1423). To understand the influence of the Ashʿarī school on Ottoman science and thought, see *Change and Essence: Dialectical Relations Between Change and Continuity in the Turkish Intellectual Tradition*, edited by S. Gunduz and C.S. Yaran (Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change Series IIA, Volume 18, Washington D.C.: 2005). For more on the Ottoman madrasa curriculum, see F. Robinson, 'Ottoman-Safavids-Mughals: Shared Knowledge and Connective Systems', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8 (1997), pp. 151–184.

[15]*Majlis II*, f. 6v–7r.

kalām to "establish and defend the correct creed (*al-iʿtiqād al-ṣaḥīḥ*), differentiating it from heretical beliefs".[16] Though he accepts one who has arrived at a belief in God through blind acceptance (*taqlīd*) as a believer (*muʾmin*), he warns that ignorance of the proofs of the *mutakallimūn*, which have been formulated to prove the validity of set dogmata (*masāʾil iʿtiqādiyya*), is a sin.[17] He takes this view to an extreme when he asserts in his *Risāla fī l-taqlīd* that, "[Such a person] is left to the will of God: if He wishes, he will forgive him and cause him to enter Heaven without punishment; if He wishes, however, He will punish him in a measure commensurate with the sin, after which he will cause him to enter Heaven".[18]

On questions relating to jurisprudence, al-Āqḥiṣārī cites many of the best-known Ḥanafī jurisprudential treatises, commentaries and glosses, such as *al-Hidāya* of Burhān al-Dīn al-Marghinānī (6th/12th c.)[19] and the *Ikhtiyār* of ʿAbd Allāh b. Maḥmūd b. Mawdūd al-Mawṣilī (d. 683/1284).[20] Sporadically, he cites the positions of other schools but this is when he wishes to highlight the agreement between other schools and his own on the legal opinions in question or because he disagrees with the position adopted by the Ḥanafī school. But it is on the question of religious innovation, *bidʿa*, that al-Āqḥiṣārī makes his most striking use of foreign schools, drawing in particular from the works of Ibn Taymiyya, Ḥanbalī jurist, and Ibn al-Ḥājj and al-Ṭurṭūshī, two representatives of the Mālikī school.

The *Majālis* and the Anti-*Bidʿa* Literature

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis al-abrār* should be seen as both a work which stands within a long tradition of writings on *bidʿa* and one of several texts from the 16th and 17th centuries connected with the Qāḍīzādeli movement.[21] Among Ottoman contributors to the anti-*bidʿa* literature was Birgivī, who presented his conceptualisation in *al-Ṭarīqat al-muḥammadiyya* and Qāḍīzāde, who wrote *Qāmiʿat al-bidʿa Nāṣirat al-Sunna Dāmighāt al-mubtadaʿa*[22] and the

[16] On the Ashʿarī-Māturīdī emphasis on the need for founding belief in God's existence upon rational proof, see A. Shihadeh, "The existence of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, edited by T. Winter (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 197–217.

[17] *Majlis VI*, f. 19r. Elsewhere, al-Āqḥiṣārī takes the view that success and failure on the spiritual path are partly contingent on observance of the law, and partly on learning the essential doctrines as formulated by the *mutakallimūn*: 'It is necessary that the worshipper who is *compos mentis* occupies himself with the formula *lā ilāha illallāh* so that his heart may find contentment and so that he might prepare himself for [receiving] knowledge of God, the Exalted. Before becoming occupied [with this formula], it is incumbent that he learns from the science of *kalām* that which will cause his creed to be sound, in accordance with the People of the *Sunna* and the Communion (*Ahl al-Sunna wa l-Jamāʿa*), such that he can vouchsafe himself from the uncertainty of the heretics. The heart, as long as it is muddied by the darkness of doctrinal heresy, will not be enlightened by the lamps of pious action." *Majlis I*, f. 3v.

[18] Al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Risāla fī l-taqlīd*, MSS. *Harput 429*, f. 35r.

[19] See, for example, *Majlis XLVII*, f. 128r-v and *Majlis LXXX*, f. 221r-v.

[20] See, for example, *Majlis LXIX*, f. 186v.

[21] See *Majlis XVIII, XIX, XX, XXIV, XXXII, XXXVII, XXXIX* and passim for views on *bidʿa*.

[22] Qāḍīzāde, *Qāmiʿat al-bidʿa*, Suleymaniye Library, MS. *Birinci Serez 3876*, f. I.

Risāleh.[23] The latter also wrote a chapter on the subject in his *Irshād al-ʿuqūl*.[24] Works within this tradition are known as the 'treatises against innovation' (*kutub al-bidaʿ*), a genre which became independent of the *ḥadīth* literature as early as the 3rd Islamic century.[25] In order to locate al-Āqḥiṣārī more precisely within this tradition and in order to identify his intellectual source, it is useful to begin with a survey of the variant ways in which the term *bidʿa* has been categorised. This is since al-Āqḥiṣārī, rather unusually for a scholar of his time, did not see any justification for a typology of *bidʿa*.

Writing on *bidʿa* can be found in several Islamic literary genres including jurisprudence (*fiqh*), heresiography (*al-milal wa l-niḥal*), the professions of faith (*ʿaqāʾid*), treatises on "enjoining public good" (*ḥisba*) and fatwa collections. The following are some of the most well-known works on the subject:

1) The Mālikī Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāḥ al-Qurṭubī (d. 286/900), *Kitāb al-bidaʿ*;
2) The Mālikī Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Walīd b. Randaqa al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 519/1126), *Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa-l-bidaʿ*;
3) The Ḥanbalī Abū l-Faraj ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 596/1200), *Talbīs Iblīs*;
4) The Ḥanbalī Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī (d. 642/1245), *Ittibāʿ al-sunan wa ijtināb al-bidaʿ*;
5) The Shāfiʿī Abū Shāma, Ab l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ismāʿīl (d. c. 666/1268);
6) The Ḥanbalī Aḥmād b. Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), *Kitāb iqtiḍāʾ al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm, mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*;
7) The Mālikī Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥājj al-ʿAbdarī al-Fāsī (d. 736/1336);
8) The Mālikī Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Lakhmī al-Shāṭibī (d. 789/1388), *Kitāb al-Iʿtiṣām*;
9) The Ḥanafī Ṣāfī l-Dīn Idrīs b. Baydakīn b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkmānī (8th-9th/14th-15th century), *al-Lumaʿ fi-l-ḥawādith wa-l-bidaʿ*;
10) The Mālikī Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Burnūsī Zarrūq al-Fāsī (d. 899/1494), *ʿUddat al-murīd al-ṣādiq/al-Bidaʿ wa-l-ḥawādith*;
11) The Shāfiʿī Abū l-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abū Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 910/1505), *al-Amr bi-l-ittibāʿ wa-l-nahy ʿan al-ibtidāʿ*.[26]

All of the above mentioned works, with the important exceptions of the *Talbīs* and the *Iqtiḍāʾ*, divide *bidʿa* into at least two types. The following table, reproduced from V. Rispler with several additions of my own, shows the various ways that scholars have classified *bidʿa*.[27]

[23] *Risāle-i Qāḍīzāde*. See especially, ff. 87v-r.
[24] Qāḍīzāde, *Irshād al-ʿuqūl*, Chapter II, f. 124v.
[25] See M. Fierro, 'The Treatises against Innovations (*Kutub al-bidaʿ*),' *Der Islam*, no. 69 (1992), pp. 204–246 and V. Rispler, 'Towards a New Understanding of the Term *Bidʿa*,' *Der Islam*, no. 68 (1991), p. 323.
[25] For full details of each text, see M. Fierro, *The Treatises against innovations*, pp. 207–209.
[27] V. Rispler, 'Toward a New Understanding of the Term bid'a', p. 324.



Jurist	Date of Death	The Classification of *bidʿa*	Legal Affiliation
Al-Shāfiʿī	204/820	*bidʿa munkara* *bidʿa ḍalāla* *bidʿa maḥmūda ≠ madhmūma*[28]	
Ibn al-Jawzī	596/1200	*bidʿa* in ritual practice is *ḥarām*[29]	Ḥanbalī
Al-Ṭurṭūshī	510/1126 or 525/1131	*bidʿa- muḥarrama* *bidʿa makrūha* *bidʿa wājiba* *bidʿa munkara*[30]	Mālikī
ʿIzz l-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Salām	666/1262	*ḥarām-makrūh-mubāḥ-mandūb-wājib*[31]	Shāfiʿī
Abū Shāma	662/1266	(*ḥasana*) *mustaḥsana ≠ mustaqbaḥa* *muḥarram makrūh*[32]	Shāfiʿī
Al-Nawawī	676/1277	*ḥasana ≠ qabīḥa*[33]	Shāfiʿī
Al-Turkmānī	7th/13th	*mubāḥa-yuthāb ʿalayhā-makrūha-muḥarrama-mustaḥsana ≠ mustaqbaḥa*[34]	Ḥanafī
Ibn Taymiyya	728/1328	*bidʿa luhgawiyya ≠* *bidʿa sharʿiyya*	Ḥanbalī
Ibn al-Ḥājj al-ʿAbdarī	737/1366	*wājib-mandūb-mubāh-makrūh-ḥarām*[35]	Mālikī
Al-Shāṭibī	790/1388	*bidʿa ḥaqīqiyya ≠ iḍāfiyya* *ṣaghīra ≠ kabīra*[36]	Mālikī
Ibn Rajab	794/1392	*bidʿa la-hā aṣl ≠* *bidʿa lā aṣl lahā*	Ḥanbalī
Al-Suyūṭī	911/1505	Mentions all the classifications of al-Shāfiʿī and others from his school	Shāfiʿī

Al-Shāfiʿī is widely considered to be the first Muslim scholar to have written a complete treatise on *uṣūl al-fiqh*[37] and is also likely to have been the earliest to formulate a justification for dividing *bidʿa* into two types – the objectionable (*madhmūm*) and the unobjectionable (*ghayr madhmūm*).[38] Others considered *bidʿa* to be of more categories than two, for example the Shāfiʿī jurist al-ʿIzz b. ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 660/1262),[39] who formulated a five-fold

[28]Quoted in Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith ʿalā inkār al-bidaʿ wa l-ḥawādith*, ed. ʿUthmān Aḥmad ʿAnbar (Cairo: 1398/1978), p.12.

[29]*Talbīs Iblīs* (Egypt, Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1921).

[30]*Kitāb al-ḥawādith wa l-bidʿa*, ed. M. Talbi (Tunis, 1959), p. 15.

[31]*Qawāʿid al-aḥkām wa maṣāliḥ al-anām* (Cairo, 1968), Vol. 2, pp. 204–205.

[32]*Al-Bāʿith*, p. 13.

[33]Quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī li-l-fatāwā* (Cairo, 1959), Vol. 1, p. 296.

[34]*Kitāb al-lumaʿ fī al-ḥawādith wa l-bidaʿ*, ed. Ṣubḥī Labīb (Cairo, 1986), p. 37.

[35]*Kitāb al-madkhal* (Egypt, 1336/1917), Vol. 2, p. 115.

[36]*Al-Iʿtiṣām* (Beirut, Maktabat al-Āriyya, 2002), pp. 272–278

[37]For an alternative perspective on this popular view, see the first chapter of J. Schacht's, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1979).

[38]Al-Shāfiʿī is cited by Abū Shāma, *al-Bāʿith*, p. 23.

[39]See his *Qawāʿid al-aḥkām*.

typology replicating the better-known five-fold typology of legal norms.[40] Ibn 'Abd al-Salām's typology was accepted widely by later Shāfiʿī jurists as well as by scholars of other *madhhabs*, such as the Ḥanafī jurist al-Turkmānī.[41]

Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya, both Ḥanbalī jurists, completely rejected the notion that *bidʿa* in matters of religion might be conceived of positively. This said, and despite the influence that these two scholars had on the Ḥanbalī school,[42] they did not represent the Ḥanbalī school *in toto* as has been claimed.[43] Ibn Rajab (d. 794/1392) is one such Ḥanbalī theologian who adopted an alternative position, made clear in his *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa l-ḥikam*, a commentary on al-Nawawī's compilation of forty *ḥadīth*. For Ibn Rajab, newly invented religious practices are acceptable with the proviso that they have a "basis" (*aṣl*) in religion: "The ḥadīth [whoever invents something in our affair which is not from it, it shall be shall be rejected] makes an explicit (*manṭūq*) statement, namely that every [innovative] action which is not validated by the Law (*sharʿ*) is rejected; [there] is an implicit (*mafhūm*) statement, namely that every [innovative] action which does have a source (*aṣl*) in the religion is not rejected".[44] The truth is that the positions of Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya on *bidʿa* were radically different to most, if not all, jurists and theologians of the classical period.

Theoretical Dimensions of the *Bidʿa* Debate

Too often the philosophical underpinnings of the anti-*bidʿa* position are overlooked in the scholarly literature. Yet an inquiry into this is central to understanding how Muslim jurists employ the term in legal discourse. The assumption that *bidʿa* in Muslim jurisprudential usage encompasses all kinds of innovation, both religious and customary, finds no correspondence in the legal literature.[45] Furthermore, various hypotheses have been put forward to explain the preoccupation that jurists had with *bidʿa*. These include the desire to monopolise the transmission of sacred knowledge, the protection of the authority of the ʿulamāʾ and the deep fear of the widespread public transmission of the word of God.[46] Though these may account for some instances, they cannot do so for all since clearly not every scholar was motivated by shrewd political motivations.

[40] The five categories of *ḥukm* according to the legal schools (which the Ḥanafīs divide into seven) are: obligation (*wujūb*), recommendation (*istiḥbāb*), permission (*ibāḥa*), detestation (*karāha*) and prohibition (*taḥrīm*). See W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, pp. 40–41.

[41] See *al-Lumaʿ*.

[42] There is a debate over whether Ibn Taymiyya can be considered a Ḥanbalī, or, indeed, whether he deemed himself to be so for this see the study of A.H. Matroudi, *The Ḥanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya: Conflict or Conciliation* (London, 2006). Ibn Taymiyya most likely considered himself an independent *mujtahid*.

[43] See for example the assertion of V. Rispler, *A New Understanding*, p. 325.

[44] Ibn Rajab, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿulūm wa l-ḥikam* (Amman, 1990), p. 77.

[45] Ibn Taymiyya makes it very clear that only innovations of a *sharʿī* kind should be considered pernicious, not those of a social or technological kind: 'Clearly the Prophet did not intend by his words, "every innovation is error", every act that was to be done for the first time, because even Islam – nay, every religion brought by a prophet – is a wholly new act. He rather intended those new acts which he had not himself laid down.' See Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), p. 235.

[46] These are some of the reasons that J.P. Berkey provides in his analysis of *bidʿa* in Muslim discourse. See 'Tradition, Innovation and the Social Construction of Knowledge in the Medieval Islamic Near East,' *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), pp. 38–65.

Perhaps the most useful source to ascertain a more nuanced understanding of the anti-*bidʿa* position is *Iqtidāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (*Adhering to the Straight Path*) of Ibn Taymiyya. Written by a scholar unsurpassed in his ability to articulate the theological bases underpinning the prohibition of "inventing religion", the *Iqtidāʾ* fits neatly within the anti-*bidʿa* corpus. This said, it is clearly distinguished by the analytical depth to which its author probed the subject. M. Umar Memon says,

> What is remarkable is that in the scaffolding of this theoretical structure Ibn Taymiyya strained all the resources of his imaginative mind. He not only employed the traditional sources of knowledge such as the Koran and *Sunna* but also fully exploited another less orthodox avenue of cognizance, viz., logic, reason. More than once he ingeniously shows how these practices, and arguments upholding them, cannot be sustained in the light of reason.[47]

Memon does not elaborate upon his observation lending the opportunity here to reflect on the arguments proffered by Ibn Taymiyya to justify his condemnation of *bidʿa* and, by extension, an opportunity to speculate on why later scholar-activists such as al-Āqḥiṣārī had such reverence for Ibn Taymiyya's work.

Ibn Taymiyya opined that people invent ritual practices and participate in them because they are incapable of finding spiritual contentment in adhering solely to the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*, and/or because they are too arrogant to submit themselves to the divine command.[48] For Ibn Taymiyya, it is a malady of the heart that steers a person to innovate in religion. He explains this in terms of the three social classes: amīrs, ʿulamāʾ and the simple-pious. Each is driven to inaugurate newly invented religious practices because of their own failure to adhere to the precepts of the divine law. The innovations of the amīrs include the "cruel laws" which they promulgate, such as the non-*Sharʿī* fines and taxes; these stem from their neglect to "enjoin the good and forbid the evil". If they demanded only what was legally sanctioned and, thereafter, distributed it in accordance with divine law, seeking thereby to consolidate God's religion rather than themselves – if they exacted punishments on the elite as well as the less fortunate, seeking to instil in people thereby a mindful awareness of God – they would have had no need to expropriate the wealth of their people.[49] As for the ʿulamāʾ, had they adhered to the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, they would have found all that they need of useful knowledge. They would not have fallen into the errors of the theologians or the speculations of the jurists, each of whom are led from one unreliable judgment to another.[50] As for the simple-pious, had they worshipped their Lord through the words and deeds which He revealed to them, they would have reached the spiritual stations to which they aspire. They would not have been compelled to replace the recitation of the Qur'ān with listening to musical instruments or to substitute Prophetic invocations with invented litanies.[51]

Ibn Taymiyya accepted that some of those who indulge in innovated religious practices can experience spiritual benefits. He saw this as inevitable because, for him, every innovation is an extension of a valid religious practice, such as meditation, fasting or prayer. Some

[47] Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle*, p. 6.
[48] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, p. 292.
[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, p. 281.
[50] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, pp. 281–282.
[51] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*. pp. 281–282.

innovations may even result from erroneous juristic interpretations (*ijtihād*) of Scripture. According to Ibn Taymiyya, people who innovate in religion because of an *ijtihād* will be rewarded for those aspects of the new act that have a legally valid foundation and forgiven for those elements which might be considered in the strict sense *bidʿa*.[52] Lest he be accused of sanctioning the invention of religion, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the "good" elements that make up any act that is *bidʿa* are outweighed by the "evil" elements (*al-ithm akbar min al-nafʿ*)[53]; any act in which the evil is preponderant over the good is *ipso facto* prohibited by the *Sharīʿa*. Assessment of the harms and benefits of any single act requires a perceptive mind and a solid foundation in religious knowledge; as such, the masses are entreated by Ibn Taymiyya to cling stubbornly to the Qur'an and the *Sunna* rather than draw close to *bidʿa*.[54]

Ibn Taymiyya puts forward interesting rational arguments alongside scriptural proofs to support his view that innovations are harmful. Some of these are applicable to all innovations, others are more specific. He points out that innovations are "derivates of disbelief" (*mushtaqq min al-kufr*): each one in some way directs people away from the worship of God alone and from following the *Sunna*.[55] Every newly invented religious practice supplants a sanctioned rite of worship. If *bidʿa* is allowed to proliferate without curtailment, the result will be the complete corruption and distortion of Islam which, according to Ibn Taymiyya, has been the fate of Christianity and Judaism.[56]

Since many religious practices which are considered *bidʿa* are not pure inventions but often the adaptation and integration of foreign rites into Islam, Ibn Taymiyya occupies himself in the *Iqtidāʾ* with the concept of assimilation and imitation (*al-tashabbuh wa l-taqlīd*). He opines that the idea of dissimilarity or differentiation of the believer from the non-believer is one of the central objectives of revelation. This rationalisation is unique in Muslim jurisprudential theory. In the following passage Ibn Taymiyya explains the theoretical basis for one of the most controversial debates in Islamic law:

> It is in accordance with wisdom that God legislated for the Prophet such deeds and tenets as would clearly differ from those of the God-displeasing and gone-astray. He enjoined the Prophet to differ from them in his way of life, even though to many their harm was not evident, and that for a number of reasons some of which are:

1. Participation in conduct breeds homogeneity and resemblance in the participants, which leads to accord in morals and deeds. And this is evident. Thus, for instance, one who dons himself in the vesture of the learned feels a certain affinity with them, or, for instance, one who wears the outfit of the fighting soldiers finds in himself an affinity with the latter's character, and unless an obstacle comes in his way his nature conforms to that character.
2. Difference in conduct brings out dissimilarity and separation which has the effect of fending off divine wrath and prevents going astray. Conversely, it would incline man towards those who enjoy divine guidance and pleasure. Thus, indeed, the God-drawn

[52] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 290.
[53] Here he alludes to Q.2.219, in which alcohol and gambling are considered prohibited because the evil in them is preponderant over the benefit.
[54] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 290.
[55] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 289.
[56] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 289.



difference will stand out clearly between His host of those in bliss and His unhappy enemies. The more man's inner life is perfect and the more he understands Islam, true Islam – not mere outward parading as a Muslim, nor blindly following mere traditional beliefs as a whole – the greater is his urge to differ both internally and externally from the Jews and Christians, and the stronger is his urge to keep his distance from their characteristics.

3. Finally, a common way of life promotes social interaction to an extent that distinction between the right-guided on the one hand and the God-displeasing and gone-astray on the other vanishes. There may be further reasons involved in divine wisdom.[57]

It can be seen clearly that in Ibn Taymiyya's estimation *bidʿa* is a corrupting force that threatens the very foundations of Islam. This deeper philosophical appraisal of *bidʿa* can also be found in the works of the Ottoman reformers, particularly Birgivī and al-Āqḥiṣārī. For the former, the root cause of dogmatic heresies and innovations in religious practice is the attempt to satisfy egoistical desire;[58] this is clearly taymiyyan. In the *Iqtidā'*, Ibn Taymiyya describes the arrogance of those who struggle to subjugate themselves to the precepts of the Qur'an and the *Sunna*, as well as the spiritual weakness in people, which ultimately hinders them from finding contentment in the religion delivered by the Prophet. Akin to Ibn Taymiyya, Birgivī considers that the evil of abandoning a legally established ritual is less destructive to one's religion than the evil which accompanies the invention of new ritual practices. This is since a proliferation of the latter ultimately results in the corruption of the religion.[59]

In al-Āqḥiṣārī's view, the innovator (*mubtadiʿ*) has a problem: his failure to recognise the perfection of the religion delivered by the Prophet. This failure drives him to inaugurate new practices, in the belief that Islam is yet incomplete:

> *Bidʿa* is more evil than sinning since the person who enacts a *bidʿa* considers that the Prophet has been somehow deficient, though he may claim that he is extolling the Prophet by enacting it. This is since he claims that the *bidʿa* he has inaugurated is better than the *Sunna* and more correct. He challenges God and His Messenger by deeming good that which the Law (*sharʿ*) despises and prohibits, namely the invention of religion. God has legislated for His worshippers acts of worship which are sufficient for them and has perfected for them their religion, completing His favour upon them. He informs in His noble Book: "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completing My favour upon you". Hence [the maxim], "augmenting the already perfected [renders it] deficient". To do so is tantamount to having an extra finger. It is an established matter in legal theory (*ʿilm al-uṣūl*) that the righteous deed is known from the evil deed by recourse to the Law rather than to the intellect.[60]

In this passage al-Āqḥiṣārī reiterates the idea that innovation is more harmful than open disobedience: the first eventually becomes integrated within the religion through habit and custom whereas the second remains a sin and therefore an act which people will seek to abandon eventually. These are yet again Taymiyyan ideas that are not original to al-Āqḥiṣārī.

[56]Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle*, pp. 97–98.
[58]Birgivi, *The Path of Muhammad*, p. 72.
[59]Birgivi, *The Path of Muhammad*, p. 73.
[60]*Majlis XVIII*, ff. 55r-56v.

Taymiyyan Influences in the *Majālis*

Ibn Taymiyya is far more thorough in his treatment of *bidʿa* than Ibn al-Jawzī. He is, in general, much more interested in treating the effects of innovation, and goes some way to describing specific forms which they can take. He speaks of *bidʿa* in almost every major piece of writing; even a cursory database search for the term in the *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā* is indicative of this – the number of separate occurrences exceed two-hundred and thirty.[61] The two key works of Ibn Taymiyya on *bidʿa*, which he himself made frequent reference to throughout his writings, are the *Iqtiḍāʾ ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (*Adhering to the Straight Path*) and *Qāʿidat al-sunna wa l-bidʿa* (*The Formula [Distinguishing] the* Sunna *from Innovation*).[62] It is in the first of these treatises where one is confronted with a very interesting continuum of ideas linking the Anatolian al-Āqḥiṣārī to Ibn Taymiyya.

A comparison of the *Iqtidāʾ* with the survey of *bidʿa* found in the eighteenth *Majlis* leaves little room for doubt that Ibn Taymiyya is al-Āqḥiṣārī's chief source. The following pages will demonstrate where al-Āqḥiṣārī draws from Ibn Taymiyya, whether verbatim or in paraphrase. The excerpts selected are polemical in nature, largely responses to a would-be opponent claiming that customary religious practices should be deemed virtuous innovations when they receive popular acceptance. Ibn Taymiyya and al-Āqḥiṣārī reject the idea that popular acceptance is a benchmark for what is sound or unsound religious practice. Their counter-arguments begin with the same two Prophetic traditions:

> "To proceed: indeed the best of speech is the Book of God, the Exalted, and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muḥammad and the worst of affairs are its inventions: every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance". This tradition [of the Prophet], reported in the authenticated [*hadīths*] of the *Maṣābīḥ*, was narrated by Jābir, God be pleased with him. In another tradition, narrated by ʿIrbāḍ b. Sāriya, [the Prophet], upon him be peace, said, "Whoever amongst you lives after me shall see much discord; so you should cling to my way and the way of the Rightly-guided caliphs. Cling to it and hold on to it with your molars. Beware of matters invented, since every invention is an innovation, and every innovation is a misguidance".[63]

Both scholars are keen that the *ḥadīth*s which apparently prohibit the invention of new religious practices supersede conflicting prophetic traditions which appear to support religious innovations.[64] The principal argument advanced by both scholars, included in the inter-textual comparison below, may be summarised as follows: if there is to be gained any benefit from newly invented religious practices, then their utility must be attested to by the Qur'an or the *Sunna*. When there is a supporting proof from these sources, then the innovation has a legal basis which justifies it; in such a case it is superfluous to treat it as a religious innovation as it is already conceived of in the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. In this way, Ibn Taymiyya and al-Āqḥiṣārī hope to protect the *ḥadith*s which prohibit innovations. Below

[61] Database search results obtained from <www.al-eman.com/Islamlib/viewtoc.asp?BID=252> [last accessed 05/08/2013].

[62] See, for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb ʿilm al-sulūk* in *Majmūʿ al-fatāwā* (Beirut, 2000), 10: 194.

[63] The expression is in al-Āqḥiṣārī, *Majlis XVIII*, f. 53r. See also Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, p. 267.

[64] ʿAbd Allāh Maḥfūẓ Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād has collected a large number of these traditions in his book *al-Sunnah wa l-bidʿa* (Damascus, 1996).

Ibn Taymiyya's *Iqtidāʿ* is presented on the left and al-Āqḥiṣārī's *Majālis* on the opposite side. The Arabic text precedes the English translation.

وأما المعارضات فالجواب عنها بأحد جوابين # إما بأن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فليس من البدع فيبقى العموم محفوظا لا خصوص فيه # وإما أن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فهو مخصوص من هذا العموم فيبقى العموم محفوظا لا خصوص فيه # وإما أن يقال ما ثبت حسنه فهو مخصوص من العموم والعام المخصوص دليل فيما عدا صورة التخصيص فمن اعتقد أن بعض البدع مخصوص من هذا العموم احتاج إلى دليل يصلح للتخصيص وإلا كان ذلك العموم اللفظي المعنوى موجبا للنهي # ثم المخصص هو الأدلة الشرعية من الكتاب والسنة والإجماع نصا واستنباطا وأما عادة بعض البلاد أو أكثرها وقول كثير من العلماء أو العباد أو أكثرهم ونحو ذلك فليس مما يصلح أن يكون معارضا لكلام الرسول صلى الله عليه وسلم حتى يعارض به # ومن اعتقد أن أكثر هذه العادات المخالفة للسنن مجمع عليها بناء على أن الأمة أقرتها ولم تنكرها فهو مخطئ في هذا الاعتقاد فإنه لم يزل ولا يزال في كل وقت من ينهى عن عامة العادات المحدثة المخالفة للسنة

As for the contention, it can be countered by one of two replies:

1) Whatever is established as good cannot be an innovation, thereby leaving the general rule operative without admitting of an exception.
2) Whatever is established as good is an exception from the general rule, and so the generality remains preserved without allowing for exceptions. Or it may be said that whatever is established as good is an exceptional case of the general rule, and the general rule having been so characterised by an exceptional case is an indication for the rest of the cases other than the exceptional case. Whoever believes that some innovations are exceptional cases within the general rule must produce a proof justifying the exceptional treatment, otherwise the letter and spirit of the general principle must remain a proof for prohibition.

The particularising agent (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*) must be a legal argument from the Book, the *Sunna* or Consensus which have the force of authority or are inferred as such. The local customs of one or most cities, so also the views of many scholars and the pious, albeit the majority of them cannot justifiably contradict the Prophet's utterance, prayers and peace of God be upon him. Whoever believes that most of

[To a contender] it can be argued that whatever is established as good on the basis of a sound legal indication is [one of the following]:

1) Not an innovation at all thereby preserving the generality of the general rule in the two *ḥadīths*.
2) It is an exceptional case (*makhṣūṣ*) in the general rule. A general rule which has in it some exceptional case is only an indication for those things which have not been excluded from it.

If someone claims that the good of an innovated religious practice is established and that it is an exceptional case within the general rule, then he is required to furnish proof that can correctly be deemed a particularising agent (*mukhaṣṣiṣ*). The local customs of most cities, and the sayings of most ascetics (*zāhid*) and worshippers (*ʿābid*), cannot be correctly considered to validate the contravention of the speech of the Messenger, upon him be peace. The particularizing agent

these customs, though consensually viewed as contradicting the *Sunna*, derive their validity from the fact that the community has supported, rather than rejected, them is mistaken. There will always be in every time those who forbid novel customs which run counter to the spirit of the *Sunna*.[65]

وهذه قاعدة قد دلت عليها السنة والإجماع مع ما في كتاب الله من
الدلالة عليها أيضا # قال تعالى ^ أم لهم شركاء شرعوا لهم من الدين
مالم يأذن به الله ^ فمن ندب إلى شيء يتقرب به إلى الله أو أوجبه
بقوله أو فعله من غير أن يشرعه الله فقد شرع من الدين مالم يأذن به
الله ومن اتبعه في ذلك فقد اتخذه شريكا لله

This rule is indicated by the *Sunna* and the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) as well as what indications exist concerning it in the Book of God. God says, "What! Have they partners, who have legislated for them some religion without the permission of God?" So whoever invents a thing in order to gain closeness to God or makes it a requirement by his speech or action, when God Himself has not legislated for it, then he has indeed legislated a thing in religion which God has given no permission for. Furthermore, whoever follows him has taken him as a partner and a deity. This is what God, the Exalted, says about the People of the Book: "They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords below God" (Q.9.31).[69]

(*dalīl mukhaṣṣiṣ*)[66] should be a legal one from the Book, the *Sunna* or the consensus of the qualified jurists (*ahl al-ijtihād*). Any ascetic or worshipper who is not from among the qualified jurists[67] is of the status of the laity – one whose views are not considered valid unless they are in conformity with the principles [of religion] and the authentic books.[68]

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[65] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, p. 271. The translation is a modification Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle*, pp. 232–233.

[66] There is clearly an error in the manuscript at this point: *dalīl makhṣūṣ* should in fact have been rendered *dalīl mukhaṣṣiṣ* (see Yazma Bagislar mansucript, f. 64v-r). The translation thus departs from the manuscript at this point in favour of the correct reading.

[67] The copyist makes a second error here: the Arabic text, *wa laysa ahl al-ijihād mina l-zuhhād wa l-ʿubbād* should be read *wa man laysa min ahl al-ijtihād min al-zuhhād wa l-ʿubbād* (see Yazma Bagislar manuscript for correction, f. 64v-r). The translation thus relies on the correct reading in the Yazma Bagislar manuscript.

[68] *Majālis*, f. 54v-55r.

[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtdāʾ*, p. 271.

[70] *Majālis*, f. 55r.

قال سبحانه ^ اتخذوا أحبارهم ورهبانهم أربابا من دون الله والمسيح بن مريم وما أمروا إلا ليعبدوا إلها واحدا لا إله إلا هو سبحانه عما يشركون ^ قال عدي بن حاتم للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يا رسول الله ما عبدوهم قال ما عبدوهم ولكن أحلوا لهم الحرام فأطاعوهم وحرموا عليهم الحلال فأطاعوهم # فمن أطاع أحدا في دين لم يأذن به الله من تحليل أو تحريم أو استحباب أو إيجاب فقد لحقه من هذا الذم نصيب كما يلحق الآمر الناهي أيضا نصيب

God, the Exalted, says, "They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords below God, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God, there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (Far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him)". ʿAdī b. Ḥātim said to the Prophet: "They do not worship them!" to which the Prophet replied, "They do not, but they do make for them lawful that which is unlawful and these, they obey them, and they make for them unlawful that which is lawful and these, they obey them". Anyone who obeys someone concerning a religious matter God has not prescribed as lawful, unlawful, commendable or obligatory will be thereby considered reproachable, which is also true of him who commands this man to do or not to do something.[71]

وهكذا جمع القرآن فإن المانع من جمعه على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان أن الوحي كان لا يزال ينزل فيغير الله ما يشاء ويحكم ما يريد فلو جمع في مصحف واحد لتعسر أو تعذر تغييره كل وقت فلما استقر القرآن بموته صلى الله عليه وسلم واستقرت الشريعة بموته صلى الله عليه وسلم أمن الناس من زيادة القرآن ونقصه وأمنوا من زيادة الايجاب والتحريم والمقتضي للعمل قائم بسنته صلى الله عليه وسلم فعمل المسلمون بمقتضى سنته وذلك العمل من سنته وإن كان يسمى هذا في اللغة بدعة

The same is true also for the manner in which the Qur'an was put together. What prevented its compilation during the Prophet's lifetime was the fact that it was still being revealed to him and God would alter or retain whatever parts thereof He wished. Had it been put together in a single volume, it would have been difficult or impossible to register an alteration every time it was introduced. But once the Qur'an and the

This is what God, the Exalted, says about the People of the Book: "They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God" (Q.9.31). ʿAdī b. Ḥātim said to the Prophet, upon him be peace, "They do not worship them".[In explanation], the Prophet said, "They obeyed them; whoever obeys someone in some religion for which there is no permission from God, the Exalted, has worshipped him and taken him as a lord".[72]

The rule in this respect may be formulated as follows: People do not originate a thing unless they see in it a benefit; if they thought it was harmful, they would not have originated it. So, whatever the people deem of benefit should be judged according to the cause it serves:

1) If the cause relates to a matter occurring after the Prophet, upon him be peace, then [know]

[71] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidāʾ*, p. 272.
[72] *Majālis*, f.55r.

Sharīca had been permanently fixed, with the death of the Prophet, the Muslims were spared further alteration by increase or decrease in the number of Qur'anic verses, as they were also a further increase in both positive and negative obligations. The provision for it was already there in the *Sunna* and the Muslims acted likewise. Though an innovation in the language, the act is nevertheless a *Sunna* of the Prophet.[73]

والضابط في هذا والله أعلم أن يقال إن الناس لا يحدثون شيئا إلا لأنهم يرونه مصلحة إذ لو اعتقدوه مفسدة لم يحدثوه فإنه لا يدعو إليه عقل ولا دين فما رآه المسلمون مصلحة نظر في السبب المحوج إليه فإن كان السبب المحجوج إليه أمرا حدث بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لكن تركه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من غير تفريط منا فهنا قد يجوز إحداث ما تدعو الحاجة إليه وكذلك إن كان المقتضي لفعله قائما على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لكن تركه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لمعارض قد زال بموته # وإما مالم يحدث سبب يحوج إليه أو كان السبب المحوج إليه بعض ذنوب العباد فهنا لا يجوز الإحداث فكل أمر يكون المقتضي لفعله على عهد رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم موجودا لو كان مصلحة ولم يفعل يعلم أنه لبس بمصلحة

The rule in this respect may be formulated as follows: People do not originate a thing unless they consider it beneficial. If they believe it harmful they would not originate it, because neither reason nor faith call upon to do so. Whatever appears to Muslims as positive must be investigated as to the need that necessitates it. If the need warranting it arose after the Prophet's death but was left by him without any negligence on his part, then it is permissible to originate what the need warrants. The same applies also if the need for originating it was present during the Prophet's lifetime but which he abandoned in view of an impediment which now, after his death, has been lifted.
As for what is originated without, however, a need warranting it, or what does warrant it are human transgressions, then, the innovation is not permissible. Any matter which may have been necessary in the Prophet's lifetime but which was not acted upon by him is simply not a positive need.[74]

that it is permissible to originate whatever there is a need for, such as the composing of polemical arguments. This is necessitated by the need to expose misguided groups. There was no need for [polemical arguments] during his time, upon him be peace, since such groups had yet to appear.

2) If the need to originate it was present during his time, upon him be peace, however was abandoned due to an impediment, which now, after his death, was lifted, then here also it is permissible to originate it, such as the compilation of the Qur'an. What prevented it being done in his life, upon him be peace, was the fact that revelation (*waḥy*) was still being received, and [with it the possibility] that God changes whatever He wills. This preventative disappeared with his death, upon him be peace.
3) As for a requirement to originate [an innovation] being present during his life, upon him be peace, without the existence of an impediment, yet he, upon him be peace, still did not enact it, then to originate it is to alter the religion of God, the Exalted. This is because if there was [truly] any benefit in it, he would have enacted it, upon him be peace, or at least encouraged it [. . .] Examples of it are the call to the two Eid prayers. Following its institutionalisation by certain Sultans, the Scholars rebuked it judging it to be hated (*makrūh*). If it were not for its innovativeness being the evidence for its hatred, it would have been said that is [an act of] remembering God, the Exalted, and a calling of creatures to come to the worship of God. It would then have been an analogue of the call for Friday prayer.[75]

[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 277. Here the translated text is highlighted so that it can be matched to its equivalent in al-Āqḥiṣārī in the facing column.
[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtidā'*, p. 278
[75] *Majālis*, f. 55r.

The correlation between the two works above is striking but it would be premature to conclude that al-Āqḥiṣārī's source is Ibn Taymiyya before first eliminating Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya as a possible source. This is since the theology and ethics of Ibn Taymiyya are re-expressed and elaborated in the work of Ibn al-Qayyim'. Describing Ibn al-Qayyim's broader intellectual outlook, Bell says, "Throughout the evolution of [Ibn al-Qayyim's] thought the fundamental theological positions remain the same, faithfully reflecting the doctrine of his teacher. It is, for the most, only the style and the scope of his writings which set them apart from the compositions of Ibn Taymiyya".[76] Furthermore, there is no doubting that al-Āqḥiṣārī draws heavily from Ibn al-Qayyim elsewhere in the *Majālis*, particularly in the early sections relating to Sufism.[77] Following an index and database search, however, it is clear that none of the passages cited above are to be found in any of the twenty-four major works of Ibn al-Qayyim.[78]

It is plain from the comparison above that, for the most part, al-Āqḥiṣārī's treatment of *bidʿa* is consistent with Ibn Taymiyya's. Al-Āqḥiṣārī, however, rarely quotes verbatim from the *Iqtidāʾ*. He mostly paraphrases his source text, which is perhaps understandable since Ibn Taymiyya's survey is rather prolix and frequently written in an abstruse manner. In doing so, al-Āqḥiṣārī demonstrates his deep understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's thought. Furthermore, he performs the task expertly, making additions and subtractions to the text, altering the architecture and arrangement of points at will. It is because of this that it is no straightforward task to identify the specific places where al-Āqḥiṣārī refers directly to the *Iqtidāʾ*.

What's in a Name?

Al-Āqḥiṣārī's omission of Ibn Taymiyya's name from the *Majālis* is interesting and might even be seen as deceitful given the extent to which he draws from the Damascene's *Iqtida*. Yet there are several possibilities as to why such an omission may be justified: the first is the position of Ibn Taymiyya on the visitation of graves for the purposes of intercession, a view which was rejected by many Ottoman ʿulamāʾ. Kātib Çelebi in his discussion on shrines in the *Mīzān al-ḥaqq* mentioned Ibn Taymiyya's view on the subject:

[76] J. Bell, *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (Albany, 1979), p. 103.

[77] For a survey of this, refer to the author's Ph.D. thesis, "Qāḍīzādeli Revivalism Reconsidered".

[78] The database search using a resource available at <www.islamport.com/isp_eBooks/qym/> [last accessed 4/09/2013] included the following texts: *Aḥkām ahl al-dhimma*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1997); *Iʿlām al-muwaqqiʿīn ʿan rabb al-ʿālamīn*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1973); *Ighāthat al-lahafām min maṣāʾid al-shayṭān*, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1975); *Ijtimāʿ al-juyūsh al-islāmiyya*, 1 vol. (Beirut, 1984); *al-Amthāl fī l-Qurʾān al-karīm*, 1 vol. (Tanta: Maktabat alṢaḥāba, 1986); *al-Tibyān fī aqsām al-Qurʾān*, 1 vol. (Damascus, Dār al-Fikr); *al-Jawāb al-kāfī*, 1 vol. (Beirut, Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah); *al-Rūh fī l-kalām ʿalā arwāḥ al-amwāt wa l-aḥyāʾ bi-l-dalāʾil mina l-Kitāb wa l-Sunna*, 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyyah, 1975); *al-Ṣalāt wa ḥukm tārikihā*, 1 vol. (Beirut, 1996); *al-Ṣawāʿiq al-mursala ʿalā l-Jahmiyya wa l-Muʿaṭṭila*, 4 vols. (Riyad, Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998); *al-Ṭuruq al-ḥukmiyya fī l-siyāsat al-sharʿiyya*, 1 vol. (Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī); *al-Furūsiyya* (Hā'il, 1993); *al-Fawāʾid*, 1 vol. (Beirut, 1973); *al-Manār al-munīf*, 1 vol. (Aleppo, 1983); *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib mina l-kalim al-ṭayyib*, 1 vol. (Beirut, 1985); *Badāʾiʿ al-fawāʾid*, 4 vols. (Mecca, 1996); *Tuḥfat al-mawdūd bi-aḥkām al-mawlūd*, 1 vol. (Damascus, 1971); *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa nuzhat al-mushtāqīn* (Beirut, Dar al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyya, 1992); *Zād al-maʿād*, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1986); *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl fī masāʾil al-qaḍāʾ wa l-qadar wa l-ḥikma wa l-taʿṭī*, 1 vol. (Beirut, 1978); *Ighāthat al-lahafān fī ḥukm ṭalāq al-ghaḍbān* (Beirut, 1986); *ʿUddat al-ṣābirīn wa dhakhīrat al-shākirīn*, 1 vol. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah); *Madārij al-sālikīn bayna manāzil iyyāka naʿbudu wa ʿiyyāka nastaʿīn* (Beirut, 1973); *Miftāḥ dār al-saʿāda wa manshūr wilāyat al-ʿilm wa l-idāra*, 2 vols. (Beirut, Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyyah, Date needed); *Hidāyat al-hayārā fī ajwibat al-Yahūd wa l-Naṣārā* (Medina, Islamic University).

> Ibn Taymiya went so far as to forbid visiting even the tomb of the noblest Prophet himself. It was he who said, "The fact that Umar, when it was desired to pray for rain, would not appeal at the tomb of the Prophet, but sought instead the mediation of 'Abbas, is proof that it is best to seek the mediation of the living". His extremism in several matters of this kind caused him to fall foul of the ulama in Egypt and Syria; they subjected him to many inquisitions and brought him to trial before the Sultan of Egypt. The public were divided, both sides numerous broadsheets. Ibn Kathir and Ibn Qayyim were his disciples; in their writings they deal exhaustively with these inquisitions. His opponents declared Ibn Taymiyya an infidel and eventually imprisoned him.[79]

It was also circulating in Ottoman Turkey well in advance of al-Āqḥiṣārī's time that Ibn Taymiyya faced unyielding opposition for his harsh views on this issue and on the question of intercession (*tawassul*). Sivāsī for one, in his *Durar al-ʿaqā'id*, seems to exploit this fact in his own defence of intercession and the visitation of graves for the purpose of deriving benefit from the deceased. He mentions Ibn Taymiyya's position on visiting graves and the fact that he was subsequently excommunicated by the scholars of Egypt for it. Sivāsī is unambiguous about his feelings towards Ibn Taymiyya: by denouncing the practice as un-Islamic, Ibn Taymiyya had gone astray and therefore deserved the harsh criticism of his peers. It was only after 'careful investigation' that the ʿulamāʾ of his time reached the conclusion that Ibn Taymiyya must be killed; and it was only because the Damascene had sought pardon from his peers, and repented to God, that he managed to escape execution.[80] Despite the problems relating to the historical value of Sivāsī's narrative – Ibn Taymiyya was not threatened with death, and neither do we have any record of him recanting his views – what we are confronted with is likely to be the version circulating within the 'Ilmiyye. Despite the inaccuracies of this account, there was probably here sufficient reason for al-Āqḥiṣārī to steer clear of mentioning the shaykh al-Islam.

Other possibilities exist, of course. Surely any scholar invoking Ibn Taymiyya's name would have been seen to be making a political statement. Ibn Taymiyya apparently preached a theology of liberation which sought to "free man from the worship of slaves and return him to the worship of the Creator of slaves" (*min ʿibādat al-'ibād ilā ʿibādat rabb al-ʿibād*)". This landed him in trouble with the authorities time and again. M. Umar Memon says: "[The authorities] could not put up with Ibn Taimiya's polemical zeal and having realised that [his] dream of recasting Muslim society in the image of its *Salaf* – a dream which was perfectly embodied and chalked out to the last minute details in his *Kitāb as-siyāsa al-sharʿiyya fī iṣlāḥ ar-rāʿī wa l-raʿiyya* – was out of keeping with the historical evolution and reality of Islam's political life, brought him to his last trial in which the privilege of giving fatwas was withdrawn from him and he was imprisoned in the Citadel at Damascus where 26 months later he died".[81] Therefore, any scholar ostensibly seeking to revive the Damascene's thought might be suspected of stirring up anti-establishment sentiments, of propagating a revivalist doctrine to challenge the position of the Sultan and his ʿulamāʾ. Yet another reason may lie in Ibn Taymiyya's style of writing. In his legal and theological writings, he frequently offended the proclivities of other Muslims. In fact some of his theological views which resulted in his

[79] Kātib Çelebi, *The Balance of Truth*, p. 93.
[80] Sivāsī, *Durar al-ʿaqā'id*, f. 59r, cited in Öztürk, 'Islamic Orthodoxy', p. 233.
[81] Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle*, p. 47.



imprisonment are not even easily reconciled with the theological beliefs of Birgivī and al-Āqḥiṣārī, both of whom, as faithful Māturīdīs, would have struggled to accept Ibn Taymiyya's condemnation of their brethren in doctrine. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya is, on the other hand, mentioned explicitly by al-Āqḥiṣārī, as is his work the *Ighātha*. The following text shows this, the translation of which is: 'Ibn Qayyim says in his *Ighātha*, quoting his shaykh . . . ' (*qāla Ibn al-Qayyim fī Ighāthatihi naqlan ʿan shaykhihi*):



It is impossible to arrive at a conclusive view on why al-Āqḥiṣārī thought it unacceptable to mention Ibn Taymiyya, particularly as he has no qualms about citing Ibn al-Qayyim. Presumably, the name of the student did not carry the same negative theological and political connotations as the name of his shaykh. Perhaps also the approach taken by Ibn al-Qayyim when writing on Sufism, which by his own admission borrowed the nomenclature of traditional Sufism, might have made his writings more acceptable to the delicate Ottoman palate, which already had a proclivity for the spiritual systems developed by Ibn ʿArabi and the other Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn.[82]

Conclusion

This investigation of *bidʿa* in the thought of al-Āqḥiṣārī has been revealing. Firstly, the influence of Ibn Taymiyya upon 17th century Ottoman revivalism can finally be asserted conclusively. The omission of Ibn Taymiyya's name from the texts of the period is what led to scepticism among some academics of such a link. Al-Āqḥiṣārī's use of *Iqtidāʾ al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, revealed by the close comparative study, is therefore a first important step towards assuaging this scepticism. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya are more deeply embedded in al-Āqḥiṣārī's work than previously assumed: in particular, the philosophical arguments of Ibn Taymiyya against *bidʿa* can be seen repeated, albeit in a more refined way, in the *Majālis al-abrār.*

Whilst it is significant that al-Āqḥiṣārī, along with his fellow Qāḍīzādelis, drew inspiration from Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim, it is important to realise that the nature and extent of the influence was limited. Whereas al-Āqḥiṣārī clearly shared with Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim their outlook on innovation and their opposition to various religious practices, particularly of certain elements within the Sufi community, it is clear that on dogmatic questions al-Āqḥiṣārī could not have been any further on the theological spectrum. As a case in point, they held very different views on dialectical theology (*kalām*). We have already was an advocate of Māturīdī theology; he was also a staunch defender of *kalām*. This is in stark contrast to both Ibn Taymiyya and his erstwhile student, neither of whom

[82]Even some of the titles of Ibn al-Qayyim's spiritual works were based on the titles of well-known Sufi manuals, such as his *Madārij al-sālikīn*, the commentary on the *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* of al-Anṣārī, and the *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn*. For more on the differences in approach of Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyya in their spiritual writings see J. Bell's chapter 'Love in the Works of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziīya', *Love Theory in Later Ḥanbalite Islam* (Albany, 1979).

concealed their disdain for *kalām*-theology. Whilst for the Ashʿarīs and Māturīdīs *kalām* was seen as synonymous with the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), Ibn Taymiyya held that the philosophical proofs of the *mutakallimūn* were redundant in the face of the Qur'an and *Sunna*, which provide superior and sufficient rational proofs for the key tenets of belief.

> These [principles] which [the *mutakallimūn*] call the principles of religion are in reality not part of the principles of religion that God prescribed for his servants . . . When it is understood that what is called 'principles of religion' in the usage of those who employ this term, consists of indeterminacy and ambiguity caused by equivocal coinage and technical terms (*li mā fī-hā min al-ishtirāk bi-ḥasab al-awḍāʿ wa l-istiḥālat*), it becomes evident that the principles of religion accepted by God, His Messenger, and His believers, are that which was transmitted from the Prophet.[83]

Ibn Taymiyya says elsewhere, and with all severity, that the so-called principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) as described in the works of the *mutakallimūn* are more aptly called the "principles of Satanic religion".[84] Whilst he does not call either the Ashʿarīs or the Māturīdīs outright heretics simply for their advocacy of *kalām*-theology – indeed, he allows belief to be predicated on *kalām* arguments for those whose natural dispositions (*fiṭra*) have become corrupted and so have no alternative but to establish belief in God through philosophical arguments[85] - one doubts whether al-Āqḥiṣārī would have found his latitude in any way compensatory. It remains intriguing that notwithstanding these significant differences in doctrine al-Āqḥiṣārī and his Qāḍīzādeli comrades were not in any way deterred from adopting the views of Ibn Taymiyya on the question of *bidʿa*. m.sheikh@leeds.ac.uk

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[83]Translation in M.S. Özervali, 'The Qurʾānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and his Criticism of the *mutakallimūn*,' in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, edited by Y. Rapoport and S Ahmed (Karachi and Oxford, 2009), p. 82. It is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya's theology had at its essence a call to return to the way of the first generation of Muslims and a rejection of foreign, particularly Neoplatonic, influences in the Muslim conception of God. According to him, excessive intellectualism serves only to weaken the faith of the ordinary believer, and leads ultimately to schisms amongst the ʿUlamāʾ. Divine Unity (*tawḥīd*) must always maintain its simplicity, and it should appeal to the masses as well as to the elite. For Ibn Taymiyya, this was the way of stability; the *kalām* theologians, on the other hand, were responsible for the corruption of the creed, never firm on a position for long and always adapting doctrines to suit their views. He says, "You will find that the adherents of *kalām* are the foremost amongst people in shifting from one position to another, certain of a position at one place and then certain of its contrary, [all the while], accusing opponents of disbelief! This is evidence for [their] lack of certainty. Cited in M. Sheikh, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Attributes of God', unpublished MSt thesis, University of Oxford, 2007, pp. 18–19. On Ibn Taymiyya's theology, see also H. Laoust, *Essai led doctrines socials et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taimiya, canoniste hanbalite* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut d'Archeologie Oriental, 1939).

[84]Cited in Özervali, 'Qurʾānic Rational Theology', p. 82.

[85]For more on this see W. Hallaq, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God,' *Acta Orientalia*, 52 (1991), pp. 49–69.